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A VISIT
TO THE HOMELAND OF
WASHINGTON'S
ANCESTORS

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A VISIT TO THE HOMELAND
OF
WASHINGTON'S ANCESTORS



With compliments of
Peter Henderson & Co.
35 and 37 Cortlandt Street, New York

IN our world wide wanderings to keep in touch with the best and newest in plant life production, we often find ourselves unusually envired, sometimes pleasantly, sometimes otherwise. We recall an experience not many years ago when Asia Minor flower bulbs were becoming known; the large and beautiful Snowdrops, Chinodoxas, Colchicums, etc., of various Taurus Mountain types, we wanted to investigate these in their natural haunts, but the route was so infested with brigands that our Consul advised against travelling unprotected and secured for us a guard of Turkish Soldiers. Nothing happened, but it was an unusual experience that would have been pleasant if anxiety could have been eliminated. Many other little episodes of our travels could be related that might make interesting reading.

Perhaps our most interesting and pleasant trip was made last season when we visited England particularly to study the latest varieties of the magnificent new race of "Spencer" Sweet Peas. The officers of the National Sweet Pea Society gave us a cordial reception and honored us with an appointment as judge at their big exhibition held in Royal Horticultural Hall, London and a Vice-president of their

Society. We were given every opportunity to study the numerous varieties of Sweet Peas in commerce and many others not yet introduced, all being well grown and in fine flower at their official trial grounds near Reading, England.

At the exhibition we met Mr. Silas Cole with whom the first of the "Spencer" type Sweet Pea originated and made an appointment to visit him at Althorp Gardens on the Estate of Earl Spencer in Northamptonshire, of which Mr. Cole is superintendent. While there we discovered that we were in the homeland of Washington's ancestors. The coincidence was so impressive, we tarried a day or two longer getting a few photographs and collecting a little Washington information amid the scenes and environment of the forefathers of America's father. Some of which we publish herewith as found, without attempt at verification.

Northamptonshire is a midland county in what is called "The Heart of England." It is particularly interesting to Americans because several personages prominently identified with our Republic in its early days, were descendants of midland ancestors. It is one of the most beautiful sections in England.

Our motor trips impressed us with the charm

of this rich pastoral country. Broad, hard, well kept highways wind over low rolling hills affording a succession of picturesque views. Valley-meadows of sunny green, are populous with fat cattle, sleek horses and prize sheep grazing or lolling among elm, oak and other stately trees which dot the landscape. An occasional shepherd with his chum—a collie—and a field of yellowing grain being harvested by sturdy yeomen adds an old world touch to the picture. Lordly trees line the roadside and cast grateful shade. Hedgerows of luxuriant green brightened by wild flowers and alive with song birds also border the roadways and divide the fields, blending distantly into dark copses and a mass of varied sylvan beauty, which almost hides from view quaint, substantial, typically English houses, though the towering spires of churches, for which this "shire" is famous punctuate the skyline here and there and compose pleasingly into the panorama.

One can scarcely realize that this earthly paradise, apparently blessed with all things that go to make life worth living; peaceful, bountiful, beautiful, was for centuries a scene of turmoil and strife, the disturbing factors being covetousness and religious fervor. There are evidences here

of life and war even before history was recorded. Diggings for various purposes having unearthed numerous weapons and implements. Stone and bone articles, hand made pottery, querns for grinding grain, portions of primitive looms, etc. as well as bones of various animals and man of the roundheaded, strong jawed race (brachycephalic) which according to archæologists belong to the pre-historic iron or Celtic age. For hundreds of years thereafter, following the data of recorded history, we learn that this country was intermittently over run with foreign adventurers. Various Teutonic (German) tribes apparently started the wave of invasions. Jutes from what is now a section of Denmark conquered and controlled this portion of Britain for many years. Then came the Angles from North Holland—from whom England derives its name (Latin Anglia, A. S. Engla-land). Soon after Saxons from Germany arrived in large numbers. These peoples, all long heads (dolichocephalic) after years of conflict fused in the common cause of opposing the Norman and Roman invaders. They were then termed Anglo-Saxons which name this collective race of long headed man has ever since borne. These long headed Anglo-Saxons, though subdued and dominated

for about two centuries first by the Normans and then by the Romans eventually won out, threw off the yoke and have ever since been known as the "all conquering race." Long contact, however, with various continental peoples of differing religious faiths caused much discussion and warmth of argument, and when the invention of printing enabled the bible to be more widely read the spirit of controversy became more acute and aroused much bitterness of feeling, differences of opinion often disrupting families. We will not go further into ecclesiastical details, merely touching upon this matter because this section of England was one of the hotbeds of religious foment and at a time when we have our earliest knowledge of George Washington's ancestors. The intolerance of the period having much to do with the immigration to America of many families from this section who helped shape the destinies of young America and have left the impress of their character with us.

The Washington pedigree is too long to be gone into chronologically here, but it is interesting to know that our first accurate knowledge of the family begins in the 11th Century, when it appears not unusual for a family to assume the

name of the estate acquired for a William de Hertburn during that period moved into the manor and village of Wessynton, the family then being known as the De Wessyngtons. One genealogist goes back of this stating the family descended from the hero King Odin of Scandinavia. This may be imaginative but considering the early settlement of this portion of England by Northern Teutons it is quite possible.

The next Washingtons that we know of were the John Washingtons of Lancashire, grandfather and grandson in the 14th Century, they were of the good sound yeoman stock that has played so large a part in the making of England and all in the world that bears the stamp of English genius and character. From these descended a Lawrence (Laurence) Washington, who was elected mayor of Northampton in 1532 and again in 1545. He appears to have been one of the brightest, most prosperous and influential of the English Washingtons. His mother was Margaret Kitson (Kytson) a sister of Sir Thomas Kitson, a princely merchant, whose daughter married Sir John Spencer. Lawrence Washington was therefore related to the Kitsons and connected by marriage to the Spencers—two of the richest and most prominent families in this

Section of England. Sheep farming and wool was the important industry of Northamptonshire during this period. The Spencers had immense flocks—tradition placing the number of sheep near 20,000. Lawrence Washington dealt in fleeces which were sold to the manufacturing centres in England and exported to Flanders—the wool market of England. He became rich so rapidly that between his terms of Mayoralty he purchased the Sulgrave estate and afterwards other properties which were thrown on the market by the disruption of the monasteries. His powerful "friend at Court" Sir John Spencer and Dr. Layton, then rector of Brington and one of Cromwell's commissioners for the dissolution of Monasteries—no doubt removed any difficulties in his obtaining a grant of the alienated lands of the Priory of St. Andrew. Thus he raised himself from the rank of tradesman to that of a wealthy squire in this "shire of spires and squires."

We dwell upon this branch of the Washington family because this Lawrence was the direct ancestor of our George Washington, he raised a large family, his sons and many of his male descendants became men of note—one a member of parliament, another was knighted, etc. For

some unexplained reason, probably pecuniary, the Sulgrave properties eventually passed from possession of the Washingtons and they appear to have been for a time in troubled circumstances. At this crisis the steadfast friendship and patronage of the Spencers served them well. The original Spencer manor house at Wormleighton was placed at the disposal of Robert and Lawrence Washington (grandsons of the Mayor) for a season until a house could be built for them at Brington the village entrance to the Althorp estate of the Spencers. Their history while at Brington seems somewhat obscure, but Robert, grandson of the mayor, died without issue in 1622. A tablet to his memory is still to be seen at Brington Church showing the true Washington Coat of Arms from which the Stars and Stripes are supposed to have originated. Lawrence Washington the other brother raised a large family, three of his sons attaining distinction, the first became Sir William Washington and married the sister of the Duke of Buckingham. The second became Sir John Washington and the third Reverend Lawrence Washington who suffered for his loyalty to the Royal cause, his son John emigrated to America in 1657 and became the grandfather of General George Washington.



SULGRAVE MANOR. The manor house was built by Lawrence Washington, Mayor of Northampton and direct ancestor of our George Washington. The picture shows the house as it now appears probably only a portion of the original structure.



BRINGTON CHURCH. Where the Spencers and Washingtons worshipped. The remains of an Eleanor Cross is pictured in the foreground, one of several erected by King Edward I to mark the resting places of the body of his Queen on its way to Westminster.



A STREET IN BRINGTON. The home village of several generations of Washingtons and the village entrance to Althorp Park, the home of the Spencers who were staunch friends and patrons of the Washingtons.



THE WASHINGTON HOUSE IN BRINGTON. Built by the Spencers, according to tradition, for Robert and Lawrence Washington, grand sons of the Mayor, when they were in troubled circumstances.



INTERIOR OF BRINGTON CHURCH. In which are entombed the bodies of Mayor Washington's grand sons, Robert and Lawrence, their wives and many members of the Spencer family.



THE SLAB COVERED TOMBS of Robert and Lawrence Washington in Brington Church. Their coats of arms are cut in the stone. That of Lawrence is impaled with the Butlers (his wives' family). Our "Stars and Stripes" originated from the Washington Coat of Arms.



ALTHORP HOUSE. Home of the Spencers. The development of a Tudor dwelling built by Sir John Spencer, the great sheep owner, who was connected by marriage with Mayor Lawrence Washington.



A GLIMPSE IN ALTHORP GARDENS where the beautiful race of "Spencer" Sweet Peas originated and Mr. Silas Cole their originator.



LOCATIONS OF THE ENGLISH ANCESTRAL HOMES OF SEVERAL MEN HONORED FOR THEIR ASSOCIATION WITH YOUNG AMERICA.

It is a unique fact that "The Heart of England" Northamptonshire and contiguous territory was the ancestral homeland of several men prominently identified in shaping the early destinies of the American Republic. The stamp of their character and genius still remain with us.

At (1) SULGRAVE, (2) NORTHAMPTON (3) BRINGTON lived the ancestors of George Washington, whose story we have just told.

(4) ECTON, was the home of Benjamin Franklin's ancestors. (Chaucer puts it "Frankleyn"). They were Protestants and strong in their views and hostility to the ancient faith so had to conceal their Bible, reading it only with a child stationed to give notice if he saw the "Apparitor," an officer of the Spiritual Court, approaching.

(5) PENN. William Penn was a direct descendant of the Penns of Penn who acquired the manorial rights from the Berkeleys their feudal associates. Wm. Penn's strong Quaker views caused him to be expelled from Oxford University

and so persecuted for his faith that he came to America.

(6) CHESTERFIELD. The grandfather of Thomas Jefferson author of the American Declaration of Independence owned a small property and resided here.

(7) STANDISH. The ancestors of Miles Standish took the patronymic name of this village their home. The family became divided by the great controversy between the Catholics and Protestants. Miles in the "faith and fury of his convictions" joined in the fight against the Spaniards in Holland and became a soldier to the finger tips, coming to the point with the rush of a thunderbolt. After the truce he became associated with the Puritans and came to America where his valor was again put to the test by three traitorous Indians whom he got into a room by themselves and then slew the lot.

(8) SCROOBY, was the home town of Wm. Brewster one of the chief founders of the Plymouth Colony and Wm. Bradford afterwards its governor. Both were converted to the serious

views of religion then spreading especially in the midlands of England. Brewster organized the Plymouth Church, but persecutions left but few adherents who had the courage of their convictions and these had to attend service in secret. This group finally endeavored to remove to Holland, but the Dutch Captain with whom they had arranged to embark from the port of Boston, 40 miles from Scrooby, is supposed to have turned informer for the Pilgrims were captured, their effects taken from them and they were rendered destitute some being imprisoned. Such treatment rankled so they eventually reached America.

(9) WILLOUGHBY. Captain John Smith of Pocahontas fame was born here. He joined a Protestant Company in France to fight the Spaniards and afterwards was one of the 100 members in the expedition resulting in the founding of the Jamestown Colony in Virginia, out of this number 54 belonged to the rank of gentlemen.

(10) SUDBURY. John Winthrop the first governor of the Colony of Massachusetts was born at Groton Manor 5 miles east of this town. Adam Winthrop a substantial clothier of London his ancestor obtained the Estate by Royal Grant.

It formerly belonged to the Abbots of Bury "St. Edmunds." The depth of feeling and impending crisis in political and religious circles caused John Winthrop to sail for the new world with 11 ships and a large number of emigrants. They arrived in Salem, Mass.

(11) LONDON. Roger Williams the founder of the Providence (R. I.) Colony was born here. He was also considerably affected with "theologitis".

Though not in contiguous territory to the English midlands it is interesting to know the English Ancestral locations of the following notables:

(12) WIGCASTLE. The Hawthorns resided here. William Hawthorn of witchcraft fame and Nathaniel the poet were descendants.

(13) HAYS BARTON. Sir Walter Raleigh (Raleigh) favorite courtier of Queen Elizabeth was born here. He was evidently a handsome brilliant fellow, fond of the sea and exploration. Most expeditions conceived by him, however, including his efforts to found a Colony in Virginia or Carolina proved abortive because it is said he was unable to lead them personally, his presence at court being desired by the Virgin Queen. Though eventually beheaded by the

succeeding regime he is remembered by all who eat potatoes and use tobacco as their discoverer and introducer.

(14) DEVONSHIRE. Henry Adams, the forefather of John Adams who succeeded General

George Washington as president lived in this South England County, but broke up his home and sailed to America to be rid of the religious persecution that was then making England intolerable.





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MARTHA WASHINGTON

and

MOUNT VERNON

